



DIPARTIMENTO
DI SCIENZE AZIENDALI
MANAGEMENT
& INNOVATION SYSTEMS



UNIVERSITA' DEGLI STUDI DI SALERNO

**Dipartimento di Scienze Aziendali
Management & Innovation Systems**

**Dottorato di Ricerca in
Marketing e Comunicazione
XIV Ciclo**

Tesi di dottorato

**L'altra "P" del marketing: il *Public engagement* come leva del
marketing nell'era 2.0**

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Anno Accademico 2014 - 2015

Abstract of Phd Thesis
in “Marketing e Comunicazione” (XIV cycle)
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The other “P” of marketing: the *Public engagement* as a marketing tool in the 2.0 era

Keywords: public engagement; university; digital communication

The role of universities in recent years is changing towards a proactive and utilitarian vision. Universities, State and Industry form a triple helix with the potential for economic and social development of the community. In this sense, activities involving the university stakeholders can have an impact on relationships that can favor the accomplishment of the third mission of the university. Since public engagement entails the myriad of ways in which activities and benefits of higher education and research can be shared with the public, it can be considered a useful tool for adopting a new approach toward knowledge-transfer beyond the academic boundaries. In a marketing point of view, public engagement is another “P” in the higher education marketing mix by contributing to the strengthening of the relations with the stakeholders. To accomplish this mission, online communication seems to be a valuable channel for engaging better the public and divulging university activities on the Internet. Despite the potential of online communication, yet there are no studies that have investigated the public engagement online and measured such aspects of the construct emerge more in digital communication. Moreover little has been investigated about which forms of communication used on the social networks have a greater capacity for involvement. For this reason, after a deep examination of former studies in management about public engagement, this thesis focuses on the different constructs of University public engagement. By studying communication on social media and analyzing the websites of a sample of foreign universities (50 European universities and 86 US/UK universities), this thesis identifies the characteristics of communication in online public engagement that might successfully engage the stakeholders, and investigates the communication approaches currently adopted in online public engagement. The thesis concludes by claiming that public engagement is another “P” in the higher education marketing mix, and by highlighting characteristics, benefits and consequences of the public engagement construct for community-oriented Universities.